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Review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups: preparations for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family

Statement submitted by the International Council of Women and Soroptimist International, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; the Baha'i International Community, the Foundation for the Rights of the Family, the International Confederation of Christian Family Movements, the International Council of Jewish Women, the International Council of Psychologists, the International Council on Alcohol and Addictions, the International Federation for Family Development, the International Federation for Home Economics, the International Kolping Society, the Italian Centre of Solidarity, the Salvation Army and SOS Kinderdorf International, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Council; and the European Union of Women, the International Association of Charities and the International Inner Wheel, non-governmental organizations on the Roster of the Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.5/2002/1.

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We, the signatory international non-governmental organizations listed above, in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council,

Recalling that:

Whereas, by its resolution 44/82 of 8 December 1989 the General Assembly proclaimed 1994 the International Year of the Family, it acknowledged implicitly the significant role that the family, as the essential element of society, can play in the general social context;

The Year served to underscore the pivotal role of families in the development process and their multifaceted functions in mainstreaming the well-being of individuals;

When the International Year of the Family was drawing to an end, two basic questions, among others, were raised: What has been achieved? What remains to be done? The Year was seen at the time as an important event within a continuing process;

Notwithstanding the obvious goals achieved, "the Year did not lead to the development of a long-term global plan of action on families similar to the global programmes on the advancement of women, ageing, youth or disability" (see E/CN.5/2001/4, para. 4);

The family, as the natural and fundamental group unit of society (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 16), is a constant of social organization, an institutional reality and a productive economic unit;

The roles of the family are partly private and partly public, in interaction with demographic, cultural, political, legal and economic factors;

Families whose bonds are based on shared experience are best placed to transmit values, to protect against crime and violence, and mutually to provide reliable care and support. The family is also an important factor of solidarity between generations;

Sustainable socio-economic development cannot succeed without the participation and achievement of families, who are the major actors and beneficiaries of this process;

Therefore,

1. Welcome General Assembly resolution 54/124 of 17 December 1999 proclaiming 2004 as the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and hope that the preparations for and observance of this anniversary will lead to an international in-depth debate on family issues;

2. Welcome also General Assembly resolution 54/262 of 25 May 2000 and the decision to convene the Second World Assembly on Ageing in April 2002, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the first World Assembly on Ageing held at Vienna in 1982;

3. Express the need for continued and holistic attention to family issues in the work of United Nations bodies and the integration of social and economic policies on the national level, which should include family-sensitive policies;

4. Urge the United Nations to play an active role in facilitating international cooperation and the exchange of experience and information among Governments on effective family policies and strategies;

5. Support the initiative to review the global situation of families in 2004, the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, as established in the multi-year programme of work of the Commission for Social Development for the period 2002-2006;

6. Suggest, moreover, that the Commission for Social Development continue to review annually the preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family as part of its agenda and of its multi-year programme of work until 2004, as stated in General Assembly resolution 56/113 of 19 December 2001 on preparations for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family;

7. Emphasize the need to foster policies that enable parents to combine their remunerated work with their family life and share responsibilities in the care of children, as well as stress the importance of equality between women and men in the family and in society;

8. Suggest that Governments promote social and economic policies targeting special needs of families. All measures should reflect an understanding of the different situations that families face over the life cycle;

9. Urge Governments to continue to increase measures to fight poverty as a major factor that affects families, especially women and children, and destabilizes entire societies;

10. Request that measures be worked out to assist families caring for disabled and frail members and cover the needs of grandparents or foster parents who assume responsibility for their grandchildren or foster children respectively;

11. Urge Governments to focus especially on how families are affected by HIV/AIDS and how they can become effective in both prevention and care, and contribute to global efforts against the disease;

12. Underline the priority that should be given to the situation of refugees, migrants and displaced families. International cooperation on family reunification is of crucial importance;

13. Recommend that technology and its impact on the family be given due consideration. In reference to the Internet, thought should be given as to how freedom of expression and the undeniable respect of the rights of persons, particularly children, and of social groups such as the family, can be reconciled;

14. Encourage non-governmental organizations to work together in a sustainable socio-economic process focusing on families; to become directly involved in the preparations for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family; and to consider that pluralism and diversity are not barriers to cooperation.